

Preface

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

"...progress is seldom without great challenge and those who press for change often meet with resistance and indeed harsh repression. Whenever NGOs and other human rights defenders are under siege, freedom and democracy are undermined. The world's democracies must push back. We must defend the defenders."

--Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

December 14, 2006

[Commemoration](#) of International Human Rights Day

This report documents the many ways the United States worked in 2006 to foster respect for human rights and promote democracy worldwide.

President Bush has committed us to conduct a foreign policy rooted in freedom, and he has identified the advancement of human rights and democracy as an essential element of our national security strategy. As the President stated: "What every terrorist fears most is human freedom – societies where men and women make their own choices, answer to their own conscience, and live by their hopes instead of their resentments."

Throughout 2006, in every region of the world, we sought to promote and defend international human rights standards and democratic principles. We helped fellow democracies establish and sustain accountable institutions of government and the rule of law. We fostered free and fair election processes and encouraged the full participation of all citizens, including women and minorities, in the life of their countries. We worked to strengthen civil societies and promote media freedom. Furthermore, where human rights and democratic principles were under siege, we stood in solidarity with those who pressed for peaceful change.

Defending human dignity and supporting the growth of effective democracies across the globe is a long term effort, and it requires strong partnerships with other governments, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector. There will be setbacks, and progress may at times come slowly, but we and our partners will persevere – for it is right and wise to invest in the dreams of men and women of every culture and color, every background and belief, who yearn to secure the blessings of liberty for themselves, for their children, and for the futures of their countries.

With these thoughts, I hereby transmit the Department of State's *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006* to the United States Congress.

Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State

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